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## News and Notes

*Membership.* There has been an encouraging response to the request for more members. The total is now well over three hundred. But our efforts must not slacken. The activity of the Association will be greatly helped by a large membership.

*Bibliographies.* Further instalments of the Scripture book-list are in preparation. Members will also be glad to know that a Scripture number of the *School Library Review* (Vol. IV, No. 1) appeared earlier this year. It contains a list of works for Catholic schools compiled by Rev. Fathers Steuert, Watts, Boyle, Lattey and Hannan; and may be obtained from the Sharnbrook Press Ltd., Sharnbrook, Bedfordshire. The price is two shillings.

*Lectures.* A lecture on the aims of the Catholic Biblical Association was given to the Ruislip section of the Sword of the Spirit, and a number of new members obtained in consequence. A series of lectures was originally planned to take place in London this Autumn, but for obvious reasons it had to be postponed. The lectures will be given as soon as conditions become sufficiently stable.

*Biblical Films and Slides.* In response to a suggestion, we have decided to print reviews of films and slides considered to be of general scriptural interest. The projector at our disposal takes 16mm. silent films.

*Catholic Biblical Association of America.* The July number of the Quarterly contains the following important announcement: "In view of the recent directives of the Holy See, and in particular in view of the Encyclical *Divino Afflante Spiritu*, the Episcopal Committee has directed the Editorial Board to relinquish their project of revising the English of the Challoner Old Testament and instead to undertake a translation of the Old Testament from the original texts, Hebrew, Greek and Aramaic. This work is now under way."

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# The Encyclical Letter "Divino Afflante Spiritu" of Pius XII

BY REV. R. C. FULLER, D.D., L.S.S.

THE fifty years between the appearance of "Providentissimus Deus" and "Divino Afflante Spiritu" have witnessed a most astonishing change of situation. In 1893 the attack on the Bible was at its height and many Catholics were of the opinion that the traditional view of Biblical inerrancy was untenable. It was chiefly to meet this that Pope Leo XIII wrote his Encyclical, affirming in the most unmistakable way that no error is to be ascribed to the sacred writers. Since that time, the attitude of the Church towards new interpretations based on recent discoveries in archaeology, ethnology and the like has been one of caution. She has wisely discouraged Catholics from too readily abandoning traditional positions, even in matters only indirectly affecting faith and morals. A confirmation of this will be found in the Encyclical "Spiritus Paraclitus" of Benedict XV issued in 1920.

Now after fifty years it may be said that the Church's policy has been entirely vindicated by the march of events. The continued progress of discovery in every field has only served to show more clearly the accuracy of the Bible, as even many non-Catholics admit. Theories which were regarded by those outside the Church as finally established, in 1900, have since been abandoned or at least greatly modified. Thus the theory of Wellhausen on the origin of the Pentateuch, then regarded as beyond all doubt, has been very extensively modified in the direction of Catholic tradition, and by some even abandoned altogether.<sup>1</sup> Catholics have played their part in this advance, as Pope Pius XII recognises in his Encyclical.<sup>2</sup> Indeed they have been in the forefront; and the Pope singles out for special mention the Dominican School at Jerusalem, which has done so much for the advancement of Biblical knowledge, particularly in the field of archaeology and philology. This commendation, coming so soon after the death of the founder, Père M.-J. Lagrange O.P., would seem to be very appropriate. The Holy Father also refers particularly to the Pontifical Biblical Commission, founded by Leo XIII, and the Pontifical Biblical Institute in which so many generations of students have obtained their degrees, and thus set their feet firmly on the ladder of Biblical learning. Next, the Pope speaks of the Commission for the revision of the Vulgate. This work, entrusted to the Benedictines, is being carried on in the monastery of St. Jerome, built for that very purpose close to the Vatican. Biblical Societies and individual Catholics also receive their share of praise for work done.

The Pope urges Catholics to apply themselves with renewed zeal to their Biblical studies and he maps out the lines on which they should proceed. His Encyclical is noteworthy for the stress laid on a knowledge of the original languages. This insistence is not, of course, new in Papal documents, as Fr. Sutcliffe points out;<sup>3</sup> but never before has it been stated so explicitly. Indeed, one immediate result has been the abandonment of the revision of the Challoner Bible by the American Catholic Biblical Association. At the request of the hierarchy they have started instead to translate the Bible from the original languages. This does not mean that the American New Testament published in 1941 is now obsolete, or that Mgr. Knox's work will not be required. Church law

<sup>1</sup> e.g. Edward Robertson, D.Litt., D.D., *Temple and Torah* (1941), *The Priestly Code* (1942), *The Riddle of the Torah* (1943). Manchester University Press.

<sup>2</sup> Published by the Catholic Truth Society, price 3d.

<sup>3</sup> *Clergy Review*, July 1944, p. 307.





still requires the passages from the Bible read in Church in the vernacular, to be translated from the Vulgate. This version in fact still remains the official Latin translation, and the Pope takes the occasion to state that its authenticity, as declared by the Council of Trent, is juridical rather than critical. This means that it contains no error in matters of faith and morals, and substantially renders the sense of the originals, though it does not do so in every particular.

In dealing with the manner of expounding the text the Pope, like his predecessors, insists that the literal sense must be first explained. He is careful to take note of a complaint which has been fairly widespread. It is that a good deal of modern exegesis concentrates too much on profane matters such as history, archaeology and philology. These secular subjects have indeed their place in Biblical studies, as the Holy Father points out, but they are only accessory. The primary purpose of Scripture is to convey theological and spiritual doctrine, and commentators should make this their chief object. "Such an exposition should not only assist teachers of theology in expounding and corroborating the dogmas of faith, but also prove useful to priests in their work of explaining Christian doctrine to the people and help all the faithful to lead a holy and Christian life." In doing this, commentators will be simply following the example of the great doctors and writers of the Church.

After a reference to the exposition of the spiritual sense of Scripture, the Pope deals with the practice known as the accommodation of the text; that is, the adaptation or application of a passage of the Bible to some person, event or thing, other than that intended by the sacred writer. While such a usage, if kept within bounds, may often be of value, especially in preaching, for illustrating doctrine, yet there are many dangers. "The faithful, and particularly those who are learned in both sacred and profane sciences, want to know what it is that God Himself means to say to us in the Sacred Scriptures, rather than what some eloquent speaker or writer is expounding with a dexterous use of the words of the Bible." Thus accommodation should be sparingly employed.

Indeed in this country it does seem to be comparatively rare. It appears to be commoner in some other lands, e.g., France; if one may judge from an excellent little book, *Les Contresens Bibliques des Prédicateurs*, by Père Bainvel, S.J.

This part of the Encyclical ends with a plea for a more diligent study of the Fathers. It is true, the Pope says, that they were sometimes less well equipped with profane erudition and linguistic knowledge than some modern commentators, but how keen an insight they had into spiritual things! Many of the commentators, at the time of the Reformation and after, appreciated this to the full. Writers such as Cornelius a Lapide and Maldonatus, while equipping themselves with the necessary profane sciences, did not neglect the Fathers, and the permanent value of their commentaries is largely due to the solid patristic doctrine contained in them.

It is possible that the very abundance of secular knowledge nowadays, and the comparative inaccessibility of the works of the Fathers, have been responsible for this neglect in our times. We talk much about them but few read them. Referring to his studies at Downside, Archbishop Ullathorne wrote: "From that time the Fathers of the Church were open to me as an inexhaustible mine of spiritual gold. I wondered why people talked about them so much and read them so little."

The modern commentator should therefore try to combine the spiritual teaching of the Fathers with the more recent secular learning.

The Pope next considers the tasks that lie ahead. Many problems still remain, and the Catholic exegete, well equipped with all the advantages of modern knowledge, has a large and fruitful field before him. The very number of problems solved in recent times is a pledge of further solutions to be achieved. But he must remember that some problems will continue to elude his grasp, and even to defy any solution. This need





cause no surprise. The obscurity of Scripture is willed by God to teach humility and diligence in study. The Holy Father adds a plea for tolerance. Commentators must judge the efforts of others with justice and the greatest charity. "They must avoid that somewhat indiscreet zeal which considers everything new to be for that very reason a fit object for attack or suspicion." Of all the matters contained in Scripture the meaning of very few has been determined by the Church or by the consent of the Fathers. Indeed it has been estimated that the number of texts authoritatively determined is less than twenty; though of course the meaning of a larger number has been indirectly decided.

In the last part of the Encyclical the Pope exhorts the clergy to expound the Scriptures to those committed to their care. Bishops are urged to foster Associations for the dissemination of the Scriptures and to promote translations in the vernacular, and Biblical periodicals. Above all should a love of the Scriptures be instilled into those studying for the priesthood.

The Encyclical could not have been more timely, coming as it does at the end of so momentous a period. As in the war now ending so in the field of Biblical study. A point has been reached when it is possible to pass from the defensive to the attack. To put it more accurately, the counter-attack has already proved successful, and it is now necessary to organize for peace. The controversial side will always be there, but we must aim chiefly, as the Pope says, at a positive doctrinal exposition. The spirit in which this is to be done is also indicated; a spirit of broadmindedness and generous appreciation of the work of others. This in no sense implies a "minimising" spirit which tries to find loopholes in the decrees and declarations of the Church for the acceptance of the latest and flimsiest "harmony" with science. But it does mean that we have all to approach unsolved problems in the realisation that there is only a general guidance available in these matters, and consequently that the solutions of others may well be as good as, and even better than, our own. In the last resort it means that we need to practice the lessons which Scripture is given to teach us, humility and diligence.

## The Approach to the Old Testament

BY REV. HUGH MCKAY, O.F.M., D.D.

(Concluded.)

THERE can be little doubt that the Bible is a complex book, but after reading it, a Greek student once wrote in his own quaint English: "The gabs are many, but the ghost is one." He was struggling to express an equally important truth. The individual books are like a long succession of melodies, each in itself fragmentary, but linked up and woven together into the harmonious unity of some vast oratorio. The basic theme from Genesis to the Apocalypse is Christ. After all, the revelation contained in the Bible is from the One Divine Source of all Truth, and though written at sundry times and in divers manners, is directed to One Person, Jesus Christ, the Heir of all things and of all ages. To do justice to that statement would demand a summary of the Biblical theology of the Old Testament. However, at the risk of being superficial, it might be as well to try and reduce the plan of the Old Testament to its simplest elements. We can divide it up under the headings of the People, the Kingdom, and the King. A more theological division into the teaching on Man (Anthropology), the teaching on God (Theology) and their mutual relation in the doctrine of Salvation (Soteriology), is sometimes adopted. This division however would be too abstract





for our present purpose, and in the Bible we meet these subjects as concrete historical realities, not as abstractions.

(a) *The People.* The Old Testament tells how God revealed Himself to a chosen race. This people started as a single family which was shaped and moulded through the centuries into a nation. The purpose of this ethnographical selection and training which occupy so much of the historical books, was to create and prepare a channel through which salvation could come to all mankind. The title-deeds of that divine election committed to our First Parents and early patriarchs can be summed up in the one word—Covenant. This covenant was ratified in a special way with Abraham and Moses. It contains the root-ideas of a great deal of sacred history and prophecy. By it were expressed the character and conditions of the relationship between Yahweh and His chosen people. Hence for the Hebrew the Law of the Covenant was more than a legislative code, it was the revelation of the Almighty to His elect, a reflection of the Divine Mind; and submission to it was the greatest act of adoration of which man was capable. All events and persons in the Old Testament are weighed and measured by their relation to the plan of that redeeming covenant. The book of Genesis, for example, covers the course of events from creation to the death of Joseph. It does so by an arrangement which may be compared to a series of narrowing concentric circles. It sketches in outline the story of how Israel became the bearer of revelation through the election of divine grace. In its genealogical tables those offshoots are dealt with first which are not destined to become bearers of that vocation. They are summarily dismissed in a few words, and the narrative proceeds to concentrate on Abraham and his descendants. Between the giant cities of Babylonia and Egypt we see the shadow of a pilgrim shepherd, and when they are crumbling into dust, his name will still be a blessing and a prophecy, for his adventurous faith is among the things that have changed the history of the world.

To be the vehicle of divine revelation to mankind was a tremendous vocation for Israel. Like many another divine choice it created its own problems and brought with it the possibility of tragedy. It did not destroy human freedom, and man's very intimacy with God carried with it the danger of His jealous anger. Men who jeopardized the fulfilment of God's supreme purpose by lack of faith, worldliness or sensuality were accursed by God, for they were rejecting the very love of God. "With many of them God was not well pleased" and their bleached bones lay white in the wilderness. Yet the many instances of man's perversity which we find in the story of God's choice and man's response, do not lessen the value or interest of the narrative. On the contrary, these very failures brought out deeper revelations and compassion from the heart of God. In and through the amazing love of the prophet Osee for his degraded wife, we read a new meaning in the history of the chosen people. Israel was betrothed to God in the wilderness and married to Him in the covenant of Sinai, but oftentimes she proved herself shameless and unfaithful to the God who had wooed and won her heart. Yet adulteress and harlot though she was, the love of God pursued her still. It was a love not disillusioned by its failure to redeem, nor repulsed by the treachery with which its advances were met, but which persisted when failure seemed final and hopeless—a love comparable with that which the New Testament declares to be the nature of God.

(b) *The Kingdom.* To be the God of the chosen people implied more than that Yahweh would be a national God. It meant that Yahweh would reveal Himself to His people as the Living God in the fulness of His power and the riches of His grace. He bound Himself to protect the nation by His almighty arm, to instruct it in His laws, and guide the complete organization of civil and religious life by His wisdom. In a word, as Supreme Judge, Administrator, and Ruler of the life of the nation, Yahweh was King of Israel, and Israel was His Kingdom—a holy nation, a kingdom of priests



(Ex. xix, 5). It was stressed that moral kingdom of God's rule over man which the rebellion of Adam had threatened. In various imperfect forms it struck root again in the story of the patriarchs, judges, and kings. After the transitional period of the judges the institution of human kingship seemed to threaten the framework of the theocracy, but the necessary adjustment came with the realization that the old theocracy was still at work under a new guise. The human king was Yahweh's deputy, king by God's grace and in some measure its God's stand not as a rival, but intended to be the reflection of God's sovereignty in visible form. As such David confesses that he and his sons occupy the throne of Yahweh for the kingdom is still called "*the kingdom of Yahweh*" (1 Par. xxviii, 6). Because his kingship was in virtue of "covenant," he was obliged to obey the terms of that covenant. The fact lay at the foundation of a political theory that was unique—the king was subject to a moral law higher than himself, and this law gave certain specific rights to the individual under his government. In this respect the prophets like Nathan and Elisha voiced the feelings of every true Israelite when from the beginning of the monarchy to its close they fiercely protested against the exercise of arbitrary authority which disregarded the rights of man.

(c) *The King.* All too clearly do we read of the tragedies that cast their shadow over the Hebrew dynasties. The autocratic Saul was rejected, David was a murderer, Solomon an apostate. With few exceptions the Hebrew kings failed to live up to the nation's high vocation which culminated in their own person. The more men saw the glaring contrast between the reality and the ideal of kingship, the more did God raise their minds by His prophets to a New David. He would not fail to be the Representative of Yahweh as the image of His goodness, and the Representative of the people of God whose primary vocation to holiness and perfection would receive its fulfilment in the High Priest in all mankind. We can see the great thoughts of salvation and the consummation of God's kingdom gather round the person of the promised theocratic King. Just as the imagination uses the images of memory, yet revises, combines and brightens them with the magic touch of poet or artist, so the prophets under divine guidance used and adapted the person and fulfilment by David's person, power, and achievements to portray the image of the greatest of the Sons of David. This they did the more readily because of God's irrevocable oath to David linking the Messianic promises with the Davidic dynasty. "None," says J. O. Boyd, "can form a just estimate of the influence which the brief oracle of Nathan (2 Sam. vii, 12—16) has had upon the thought of later times, without going through the Old Testament, to say nothing of the New, with an ear open for the many echoes which this one clear voice has awakened in the souls of hating, believing or not believing. All criticism admits the priority and influence."<sup>1</sup> If we may change the metaphor, we can watch the stream of Messianic promise broaden and deepen as it pursues its way through every region of Hebrew history and see how profoundly it is coloured by the vicissitudes of the monarchy, till it pours itself into the open sea of the New Testament . . . "He shall sit upon the throne of David his father, and of his kingdom there shall be no end."

These random jottings may serve as a popular introduction to the greatest inheritance of Israel. However, from earliest times Christian writers like Barnabas,<sup>2</sup> Clement<sup>3</sup> and Justin<sup>4</sup> remind us that it is an inheritance that now belongs to the Church. Every day in her liturgy she spreads out its riches for our reverence and love. To neglect the Old Testament is to lessen our understanding of Him Who is its Perfect Fulfilment.

<sup>1</sup> Cfr. J. O. Boyd, "Echoes of the Davidic Covenant," in the *Princeton Theological Review*, 25 (1927), p. 587.

<sup>2</sup> Cfr. Barnabas, 2, 7, 10 (ed. Bihlm., II).

<sup>3</sup> Cfr. 1 Clem., 19, 1 (ed. Bihlm., 46).

<sup>4</sup> Cfr. Dialog. 23, 2 (ed. Arch., I, 128).





## Question and Answer

*Is there any ground for thinking that our Lord did not feel hunger during his forty days' fast?*

IT has been asserted in the past that according to St. Matthew our Lord did not feel hunger until the forty days were past. This strange opinion was due to a failure to notice the characteristics of the Evangelist's style. In his recent Encyclical *Divino Afflante Spiritu* Pope Pius XII lays stress on the fact that the biblical writers were eastern and remote from us in time and that consequently their modes of thinking and writing were very different from ours. And though the writers of the Bible were inspired, God allowed them to write in the manner of their time and nation. It follows that if we read and understand them in accordance with our modern and western habits of thought and expression, we are bound to misinterpret their meaning.

At the end of the Sermon on the Mount St. Matthew writes: "It came to pass when Jesus had fully ended these words, the people were in admiration at his doctrine" (vii, 28). It will not occur to anyone that the crowd listened to our Lord's words without any emotion and began to marvel at His teaching only when He had finished speaking. St. Matthew writes in this way as he found it a convenient manner of passing from the recital of our Lord's words to what he had himself to say. Similarly, after the mention of Christ's fast he wished to go on to recount the temptations and the first of these was founded on our Lord's hunger. So the Evangelist found it a convenient transition to write as he did, "When he had fasted forty days and forty nights, afterwards he was hungry." But this no more means that our Lord had not felt hunger before than the previous text means that the multitude felt no admiration till our Lord had finished His address.

E. F. SUTCLIFFE, S.J.

## Book Review

*A Commentary on the New Testament.*

THE Catholic Biblical Association of America has lost no time in producing valuable results. This sudden bursting into life of a vigorous Biblical activity has been a welcome surprise and a promise of good things in store for the whole Catholic English-speaking world. *The Catholic Biblical Quarterly* is a periodical of a kind that could have been started only in the States; it is much to be hoped that it will maintain a big circulation and a high standard of work, and find increasing support in the British Isles. The revision of the Challoner-Rheims New Testament (1941) has topped the million, it is said, in its sales, and is doubtless the best edition of that text yet produced, in language as in all else. It is a commentary on that revision that has now been published by the Catholic Biblical Association through the firm, William H. Sadlier, Inc., under the title: *A Commentary on the New Testament* (1942). The price is about fifteen shillings, which is cheap for a book of 736 pages, admirably printed and produced, with several founts of type in use throughout.

The plan is a simple one: the Books of the New Testament are each dealt with in turn, but there are also special articles on the New Testament background, the parables of the Gospels, the literary relations of the first three Gospels and the life and epistles of St. Paul. At the end we have an index of Scripture texts, dealing with various topics





set in alphabetical order, which should help preachers and others to find quickly texts suitable to their subject. Some additional reading is then indicated which should prove useful to all who wish to study the whole or part of the New Testament somewhat more closely. Finally there is a glossary of terms and names, providing a good deal of information about persons and things which many may be glad to find at hand. A number of the important Fathers are there; and such subjects as inspiration and inerrancy, papyri, parallelism, the parousia, the Vulgate and other versions are all dealt with concisely. The Commentary has been well thought out and should greatly promote general knowledge of the New Testament.

The policy appears to have been to spread out the work as much as possible. The two epistles to the Thessalonians have been wisely assigned to the same editor; perhaps this coupling of epistles might have been carried further, especially in the case of epistles so closely connected as those to the Corinthians. St. Paul's doctrine of justification might have been made clearer had they been given a common editor. Ephesians and Colossians run so closely parallel to each other that here again such an arrangement might have been advisable. Jude is among the most difficult of New Testament epistles; one of the problems being its relation to II Peter. Apart from the three Pastoral epistles and the single epistle to the Hebrews, it is a peculiar fact, worthy perhaps of more recognition, that St. Paul's epistles tend to run in pairs.

The commentary necessarily confines itself to short and summary statements even when dealing with difficult and disputed matters, but, in general, account is taken of prevalent views and a reasonable reserve is practised in regard of uncertain conclusions. Thus the view is favoured that our Lord celebrated a Jewish Passover at the Last Supper, but it is not put forward as certain. An obvious difficulty is presented by John xviii, 28, where a comment is made that seems not a little hazardous, to the effect that "it is quite possible that for Galilean pilgrims, Thursday was the 14th, while for the Jews of the city, Friday was the 14th Nisan." On Luke ii, 1, the view is evidently preferred, and with good reason, that our Lord was born in 8 B.C., but the editor shows himself aware of the difficulties involved in this question.

On a work covering the whole of the New Testament, however, criticisms can be made without end, from which it is best to refrain, for every reason, including that of space. The last word must be one of hearty welcome to a work which will certainly help to spread interest in the New Testament, together with a proper reverence and devotion, and this (it may well be hoped) in these islands also, which at present are suffering somewhat for lack of such a book.

C. LATTEY, S.J.

